

**VSH Employee Futures Work Group Meeting
Friday, April 7, 2006, 1:00 – 2:00 p.m.
AHS Secretary's Conference Room**

**MINUTES
(approved April 14, 2006)**

Deputy Secretary Steve Gold convened the meeting at 1:10 PM. He welcomed everyone, distributed the proposed agenda, and began with introductions.

VSEA representatives

Conor Casey introduced himself as VSEA legislative coordinator.

Keith Goslant...as benefit specialist in VSH admissions.

Annie Noonan...as executive director with 26 years at VSEA.

John O'Brien...as Psychiatric Technician on Brooks II for 9 years.

Goldie Watson...VSH nurse educator; arrived after introductions.

Vermont Department of Health

Laura DeForge is human resources administrator for VSH with 30+ years state service.

Terry Rowe is VSH executive director, starting in June 2004.

Judy Rosenstreich is senior policy advisor for VSH Futures, a new position. She shared past experience related to VSH...executive director of VSEA and the council of community mental health agencies, Waterbury state representative, and living for two years on hospital grounds while her husband was VSH administrator.

Gail Rushford is AHS personnel manager, previously VSEA staff representing VSH employees, and staff on Medical 3 for 1.5 years.

Dena Weidman is VSH director of operations with many years at VSH in various positions.

Steve Gold, AHS Deputy Secretary, is pleased to be back in human services where he has spent most of his career. He told memories of his VSH work experience in alternative education in 1972.

Role of the Work Group

Steve reviewed each point outlined on the agenda.

- Judy will provide public notice of meetings; provide meeting schedule; and take minutes.

- Minutes will first go out to members for review with additions and/or corrections, then become public.
- Public comments are taken at meetings following work group members' discussion of each topic / issue.
- Gail will convene, organize and facilitate the group.
 - Meetings will be held in Waterbury to accommodate access by VSH employees.
 - Meetings will be held Mondays or Friday afternoons for the duration of the legislative session.
- This and all other Futures work groups are established by the Futures Advisory Group and, as such, provide input to the larger group which in turn recommends to AHS Secretary. While the work group does not have decision-making authority, its work is critical to the whole process.

Charge to the Group - Steve Gold, Deputy Secretary, AHS

- Identify whole range of options for the future of VSH staff in relation to closing of the current VSH facility.
 - The wording was changed in response to VSEA objections to the term “closing.” Judy came up with language acceptable:

Identify the whole range of options for the future of VSH staff to enable the transition of the psychiatric care services that are currently provided at the Vermont State Hospital to a new facility.

- Analyze the pros and cons of each option in terms of strengths and weaknesses.
- Rank order the options.
 - VSEA raised a concern about the equity of representation between labor and management in regard to voting given that there are five work group members representing VSEA and six members representing management.
 - Steve stated that either one more member from VSEA or one less voting member from management would resolve this. He asked Annie to come back with her preference.
 - Addendum: After the meeting, Steve communicated with Annie, clarifying that Judy is Futures staff and does not have a vote.
- Describe the requirements for each preferred option to succeed.

- Steve gave a hypothetical example: If the new facility to provide psychiatric care services was built at or near a unionized community hospital, the descriptive language might read that VSH staff who may choose to accept employment at the new facility would be eligible for hospital union membership without harm to their employment status.
- Conor asked if the options developed / recommended by the work group could be in contradiction to The Vermont Mental Health Futures Plan. Steve said “no” because, first, as Conor pointed out, the Futures Advisory Committee has asserted that alternatives should be examined. Second, to be most relevant, the primary focus should be on the Futures Plan as approved by the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee. Third, it would diminish the credibility of a process that aims to retain the value of VSH staff as a component of the transition of psychiatric care services currently provided at VSH.
- Judy commented that the broad and diverse composition of the Futures Advisory Group brings together the full range of perspectives and qualifications that were necessary to arrive at and recommend a direction for the transformation of the mental health system of care. Those of us on the Employees’ Futures Work Group do not reflect all of these perspectives. Our role is more focused.
- Goldie commented that if Fletcher Allen was to build a facility in Waterbury, VSH staff would be here.
- Terry described the state and FAHC as collaborative partners.
- Develop a report to the Futures Advisory Group.

Discussion of Charge to the VSH Employees Futures Work Group

- Annie asked what might be provided to the work group in the way of financial or other assistance to carry out its charge. Examples are travel expenses to research a parallel situation in another state, time off without loss of pay or annual leave for VSH employees to go on a field trip, and payment of mileage.
- Steve stated that he is not aware of anything but ourselves, our time and energy, to do the work. Other work groups do not have a budget. The issue concerning expenses is legitimate, however, and he will get back to the work group regarding this.
- Mental Health Weekly Update: The work of this group will be included in the weekly update.

- Futures Advisory Committee updates: These are posted on the weekly update which goes to all VSH employees. As a Futures Advisory Group member, Conor may also keep us informed.
- Conor asked a hypothetical question: If FAHC desires to operate an inpatient psychiatric facility using their own staff, will the VSH Employees Futures Work Group be told immediately? Steve responded that he wants the work group to spend its time productively and that the work group is part of a larger process in which communication is widely shared.
- Steve indicated that approval of the Futures plan by the Mental Health Oversight Committee includes an amendment that addresses the labor relations piece. At Judy's request, Conor agreed to bring this statutory language to the work group.

Timeline for the VSH Employees Futures Work Group

- August 1, 2006 is the deadline for submission of the work group's report.
- This date will allow the Futures Project to submit a plan to the Mental Health Oversight Committee to address VSH staff employment / benefit issues for the September 2006 timeline approved by that body.

Future meeting Schedule

- Meetings were set for April 14, 21, and 28 from 2:00 to 4:00 in the AHS Secretary's Conference Room, Waterbury.
- Judy will warn the meetings.
- Annie offered to bring cookies and fruit.

The meeting adjourned at 4:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Judy P. Rosenstreich